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COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF EMAIL REQUEST STRATEGIES USED BY
NATIVE AND NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH IN ACADEMIC SETTINGS

By

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Comparative analysis of email request strategies used by native and non-native speakers of English in academic settings

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This thesis presents an analysis of pragmatic features of email request composite parts: email openings and closings, request Head Acts, and supportive moves elicited from native speakers (NSs) and non-native speakers (Non-NSs) of English, in two different email request situations. The two email request situations in this study have different levels of imposition, where the email request in situation 1 is considered more of an imposition than the email request in situation 2. It is thus expected that email requests in situation 1 would exhibit more politeness features than email requests in situation 2.

Analysis of the email request composite parts in this study, however, revealed that neither NSs nor Non-NSs used more politeness features in the email request in the situation of higher imposition than in the situation of lower imposition. This finding suggests that the participants see the imposition in both email request situations as similar. Another possible explanation is that the social power and social distance of the speaker and the hearer could be more significant factors that trigger the use of different linguistic devices in email requests.

The analysis of the email request composite parts in this study also shows that non-native speakers of English approximate native-like proficiency in their use of appropriate request strategies, and supportive moves that elaborate the request Head Act externally. On the other hand, Non-NSs tend to use fewer syntactically and lexically complex internal modifications and slightly more formal email openings and closings in both email request situations. Following Hardford and Bardovi-Harlig (1996), I suggest that Non-NS email requests in this study that contain fewer syntactically and lexically complex internal modifications may be judged as rude or inappropriate by faculty recipients, leading to their desire not to fulfill the request. I also suggest that the fact that Non-NSs tend to use slightly more formal email openings and closings in both email request situations may lead some professors to perceive their requests as more imposing than NSs email requests.

Additionally, the analysis shows that in both email situations, NSs tended to follow the expected request perspective and also maintain a lower level of coerciveness whereas Non-NSs tended to conform to the expected request perspective, but to disregard the level of request coerciveness. As a result, Non-NS email requests might be perceived as more imposing than NS email requests.

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: Overview of the relevant literature.....	4
2.1: Request speech act and its composite parts.....	4
2.2: Interlanguage request.....	14
2.3: Interlanguage email requests in academic settings.....	16
2.4. Theoretical issues addressed in this thesis.....	17
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	19
3.1: Participants.....	19
3.2: Data collection.....	20
3.3: Data analysis procedure.....	23
Chapter 4: Results.....	25
4.1: General email textual features.....	25
4.1.1: Openings.....	25
4.1.2: Closings.....	28
4.2: Request Head Act.....	30
4.2.1: Request strategies.....	30
4.2.2: Request Perspective.....	32
4.2.3: Internal modifications.....	34
4.3: Supportive moves.....	39
4.4: Extra-linguistic factors.....	43
Chapter 5: Discussion.....	46
5.1: General email textual features.....	46
5.1.1: Openings.....	46
5.1.2: Closings.....	47
5.2: Request Head Act.....	48
5.2.1: Request strategies.....	48
5.2.2: Request Perspective.....	49
5.2.3: Internal modifications.....	52
5.3: Supportive moves.....	53
5.4: Extra-linguistic factors.....	55
Chapter 6: Conclusion.....	58
6.1: Summary.....	58
6.2: Implications.....	61
6.3: Limitations and issues for further research.....	62

Appendices.....	65
References.....	69

1. Introduction

This thesis aims to contribute to the literature on the pragmatics of interlanguage email requests in academic settings. In what follows, I analyze the pragmatic features of email request composite parts: email openings and closings, request Head Acts, and supportive moves elicited from native speakers (NSs) and non-native speakers (Non-NSs) of English, in two different email request situations. In the first email request situation, participants were asked to compose an email in which they request an extension on the course assignment from a professor. In the second email request situation, the participants were asked to compose an email asking their professor to lend them a book. These two email request situations have different levels of imposition. The email request in situation 1 is considered more of an imposition than the email request in situation 2. It is thus expected that email requests in situation 1 would exhibit more politeness features than email requests in situation 2.

Analysis of the email request composite parts in this study, however, revealed that neither NSs nor Non-NSs used more politeness features in the email request in the situation of higher imposition than in the situation of a lower imposition. This finding suggests that the participants see the imposition in both email request situations as similar. I also found that even though non-native speakers of English approximate native-like proficiently in their use of appropriate request strategies and supportive moves that elaborate the request Head Act externally, they tend to use fewer syntactically and lexically complex internal modifications and slightly more formal email openings and closings in both email request situations. Following Hardford and Bardovi-Harlig (1996), I suggest that Non-NS email requests in this study that contain fewer syntactically and

lexically complex internal modifications may be judged as rude or inappropriate by faculty recipients, leading to their desire not to fulfill the request. I also suggest that some professors may perceive the Non-NS email requests with slightly more formal email openings and closings as more imposing. I further found that in both email situations, NSs tended to follow the expected request perspective and to maintain a low level of coerciveness, whereas Non-NSs tended to conform to the expected request perspective, but to disregard the level of request coerciveness.

This thesis is organized as follows. In Chapter 2, I discuss previous studies of request speech acts and their composite parts. I also provide an overview of previous studies of interlanguage request speech acts, focusing on interlanguage email requests in academic settings. In Chapter 2, I propose that this thesis adds to the literature by studying politeness in academic email requests produced by native speakers of English and Brazilian learners of English, a group of ESL learners not examined previously. In Chapter 3, I describe the methodology used in this study, outlining how the data for this thesis was collected and analyzed. Chapter 4 focuses on the results of this project. In this chapter, I first analyze general email textual features, such as openings and closings. Second, I analyze email request Head Acts, focusing on request strategies, request perspective, and internal modifications. Third, I look at supportive moves used to modify request Head Acts externally. Finally, I examine extra-linguistic factors, such as participants' assessment of the degree of imposition in each email request, the amount of time they spent writing each email, and the participants' likelihood of writing each such email situation. In Chapter 5, I discuss the results of the thesis project. In Chapter 6, I conclude by summarizing the findings and analyses of this thesis, discussing the

implications as well as limitations of this research, and presenting issues for further research raised by this analysis.

2. Overview of the relevant literature

This chapter provides an overview of previous studies on request speech acts, their composite parts and interlanguage request speech acts, focusing on interlanguage email requests in academic settings. In §2.1 I provide a definition of a request speech act and discuss its composite parts; §2.2 provides an overview of previous studies on interlanguage requests; §2.3 discusses previous studies on interlanguage email requests in academic settings; and §2.4 shows how this thesis expands on these previous studies.

2.1 Request speech act and its composite parts

Searle (1979) classifies a request as a directive speech act that expresses the speaker's desire to get the hearer to perform some future action on behalf of the speaker. In terms of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, a request is considered a Face Threatening Act (FTA) since hearer's compliance with the request interferes with his/her desire to remain autonomous and independent. At the same time, by making a request, the speaker puts at risk his/her positive face since the hearer might not comply with the request threatening speakers desire to be approved. In order to preserve his/her positive face and mitigate the effect of the FTA on the hearer's negative face, the speaker uses different politeness strategies when making a request. For example, when asking a professor for an appointment a student can use the following strategies: (1) state the request on record formulating it in the imperative and direct way (e.g., "Meet with me!"); (2) phrase the request using positive politeness expressing solidarity with the hearer ("Let's meet to discuss your ideas."); (3) word the request with negative politeness by

showing respect to hearer's autonomy and by freedom of action. ("Would you be willing to meet with me for just a minute about this concept?"); (4) make an off-record request by hinting ("Usually when I talk through a concept, I can understand it better."); (5) not make the request at all.

Brown and Levinson (1987) also state that the choice of strategy a speaker uses to compose a request depends on the weight of the FTA caused by the request as assessed by the speaker. There are three variables that can influence the weight of the FTA: (1) the degree of imposition, defined as the 'degree to which they are considered to interfere with an agent's wants of self-determination or of approval (negative and positive face wants)' (p. 77); (2) the relative power of the hearer over the speaker, defined as "the degree to which the hearer can impose his own plans and his own self-evaluation (face) at the expense of the speaker's plans and self-evaluation" (p. 77); (3) the social distance between the speaker and the hearer, defined as the "symmetric social dimension of similarity/difference within which" the speaker and hearer "stand for the purposes" of an act, and can refer to the "frequency of interaction and the kinds of goods exchanged between the speaker and the hearer" (p. 77).

The choice of politeness strategy influences the linguistic means the speaker uses to compose a request. Such linguistic means were studied as a part of the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). Researchers who took part in the project analyzed two speech acts - requests and apologies - in different languages in order to develop a theoretical and methodological framework for collecting comparable cross-cultural data as well as a system for coding their data. As a result of this project, researchers developed a coding manual, which describes how a request can

be analyzed linguistically. The authors use the term “request sequence” to refer to all the utterances involved in the request speech act. According to the manual, each request sequence consists of up to three components: Alerter, Head Act, (which can be optionally modified by downgraders or upgraders), and Supportive Moves. Example (1) below represents a request sequence:

(1) John, close the window, please. I am terribly cold.

Request sequence		
Alerter	Head Act	Supportive move
John,	close the window, please	I’m terribly cold

In the example above, *John* is an Alerter, a part of a request sequence that turns the hearer’s attention to the request that follows it. *Close the window* is a Head Act (also referred to as a ‘core request’ or ‘request proper’), a minimal unit of the request realization. *Please* is an optional downgrader, an internal modification of the Head Act that softens the impositive force of the Head Act. *I am terribly cold* is a supportive move, an external modification of the request Head Act.

According to the CCSARP manual (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, pp. 273-289), each request Head Act can be analyzed along two dimensions: (a) strategy type, and (b) request perspective. There are nine request strategies identified by the CCSARP coding manual. These request strategies correspond to three levels of directness: (i) direct strategies (mood derivable, explicit performative, hedged performative, locution derivable, want statement); (ii) conventionally indirect strategies (suggestory formulae, query preparatory); and (iii) nonconventionally indirect strategies (strong hints, mild hints).

The levels of directness are based on a scale of ‘illocutionary transparency’ (Blum-Kulka, 1987, p.133). In other words, the more clear the communicative effect (e.g. requesting) of an utterance, the more direct it is. In direct request strategies the speaker’s intention is indicated through the grammar and vocabulary used to compose the utterance. The speaker’s intention in the conventionally indirect strategies is derived via conventions in the wording of the utterance or via conventions of the semantic content of the utterance. This means the utterance itself does not include a request, but due to the choice of specific wording or semantic content, the hearer understands that the speaker is requesting something. The interpretation of the speaker’s intention in a nonconventionally indirect request must be inferred, since it is not indicated by syntactic, lexical, or semantic means. In order to interpret the speaker’s intention in a nonconventionally indirect request, the hearer needs to know more about the context in which the utterance was used.

Table 1 below is a summary of request strategies according to their respective levels of directness. The strategies within each level are in the order from more direct to less direct.

Level of Directness	Request Strategy	Example
Direct	<u>Mood derivable</u> : the communicative effect of an utterance of the request is derived via the grammatical mood of the utterance.	<i>Close the window.</i>
	<u>Explicit performative</u> : the communicative effect of the utterance is explicitly stated by the relevant performative verb that explicitly describes the intended speech act.	<i>I am asking you to close the window.</i>

	<u>Hedged performative</u> : the performative verb denoting requestive intention is modified by modal verbs or verbs expressing intention.	<i>I have to ask you to close the window.</i>
	<u>Locution derivable</u> : the speaker's intention is directly derivable from the semantic meaning of the utterance.	<i>You have to/should/must/ought to close the window.</i>
	<u>Want statement</u> : the utterance expresses the speaker's desire that the event expressed by the utterance be carried out by the hearer.	<i>I'd like you to close the window.</i>
Conventionally indirect	<u>Suggestory formulae</u> : the speaker's intention is phrased as a suggestion to perform a specific action.	<i>How about closing the window?</i> <i>Why don't you close the window?</i>
	<u>Query Preparatory</u> : the utterance contains reference to a preparatory condition for the feasibility of the request (e.g. ability, willingness, possibility).	<i>Can you close the window/I was wondering if you would close the window</i>
Nonconventionally indirect	<u>Strong hint</u> : the utterance refers to relevant elements of the intended action.	<i>The window is open</i> (speaker's intention: getting the hearer to close the window)
	<u>Mild hint</u> : The utterance does not contain any reference to the intended action. The communicative effect can be derived from context analysis.	<i>It is very cold in here.</i> (speaker's intention: getting the hearer to close the window)

Table 1. Request strategies and their levels of directness (adapted from Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, pp. 278-280)

In previous research on politeness and indirectness it is argued that more indirect illocutions have a higher degree of politeness: “(a) because they increase the degree of optionality, and (b) because the more indirect an illocution is, the more diminished and

tentative its force tends to be” (Leech, 1983: 131-32). Contrary to such conclusion, Blum-Kulka (1987) argues that directness and politeness of request should be treated as different notions. In her research of native speakers’ perception of politeness and directness in Hebrew and English request, the author notes that while the most direct strategy (Mood derivable) is considered the least polite, the most indirect strategy (Hints) is not perceived as the most polite. Both English and Hebrew native speakers ranked conventionally indirect strategies as the most polite. Blum-Kulka (1987) explains such tendency as to do with the need of the speaker to make the request pragmatically clear and at the same time minimize the threat to the hearer’s negative face. Both needs are satisfied in conventionally indirect strategies where the interpretation of the sentence meaning is still unambiguous (pragmatically clear), and the hearer negative face is not threatened.

Within the CCSARP coding manual the choice of perspective in the Head Act is also analyzed. For example, the Head Act can be speaker oriented, focused on the role of the speaker (*‘Can I have it?’*), or hearer oriented, focused on the role of the hearer (*‘Can you do it?’*). The request can also be inclusive, including both the speaker and the hearer, (*‘Can we close the window?’*) or impersonal, including neither the speaker, nor the hearer (*‘The window needs to be closed’*). According to Blum-Kulka and Levenston (1987), the use of the hearer oriented perspective makes requests more imposing than the use of the speaker-oriented perspective, because when the speaker avoids naming the hearer as the performer of the requested act, it minimizes the imposition of the request on the hearer negative face. Since speaker-oriented requests also imply that the speaker asks for permission, this means that the recipient of the request has control over the speaker.

Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1984) state that speaker oriented requests are perceived as more polite than hearer oriented ones since they avoid the appearance of trying to control or impose on the hearer.

The CCSARP states that the request Head Act can also include internal modifications, which are defined as non-essential elements of the utterance without which the Head Act can still be understood as a request. House and Kasper (1981) and Faerch and Kasper (1989) state that internal modifications can function as sociopragmatic devices, affecting the social impact of the utterance on the hearer. For example, internal modifications can act as downgraders, making the request less forceful, or as upgraders, making the request more coercive.

Downgraders are classified into two categories: (a) syntactic downgraders; (b) lexical/phrasal downgraders. The CCSARP coding manual identifies seven types of syntactic strategies that can be used to mitigate the requestive force of the request.

1. Interrogative: a statement in which the speaker asks someone to perform an action (e.g., *Can you close the window?*).

2. Negation of a preparatory condition: a negative structure of the utterance that addresses compliance or willingness to carry out the request act (e.g., *You couldn't close the window, could you?*).

3. Subjunctive: a verb is optionally used in the subjunctive form to express various states of unreality such as a wish, emotion, possibility, judgment, opinion, necessity, or an action that has not yet occurred (e.g. *It might be better if you were to close the window now*).

4. Conditional: a verb has a conditional mood form and refers to a hypothetical state of affairs, or an uncertain event, that is dependent on another set of circumstances (e.g.

Would you close the window?).

5. Aspect: a sentence is optionally formed with the addition of an aspect marker (e.g. *I am wondering if you can close the window*).

6. Past tense: a verb in a past tense used with a present tense reference (e.g. *I wanted to ask you if you could close the window*).

7. Conditional clause: a sentence that states that the action in the main clause can only take place if a certain condition is fulfilled (e.g. *It would be so nice if you could close the window*).

The CCSARP coding manual identifies seven types of lexical and phrasal downgraders.

1. Politeness marker: an optional element added to the utterance by the speaker to request cooperative behavior (e.g. *Please, close the window*).

2. Understater: an adverbial phrase by means of which the speaker underrepresents the state of affairs expressed in the utterance (e.g. *Could you close the window just a bit*).

3. Hedge: an adverbial used by the speaker in order to avoid specifying the proposition precisely (e.g. *I'd kind of like you to close the window*)

4. Subjectivizer: an expression in which the speaker explicitly expresses his or her subjective opinion (e.g. *I wonder if you would close the window*).

5. Downtoner: a lexical or phrasal element, which the speaker uses in order to decrease the impact of his or her request (e.g. *Could you possibly/perhaps close the window?*)

6. Cajoler: a conventionalized expression in which the semantic meaning is only distantly relevant to the meaning of the utterance. Such expressions are used in order to build and maintain favorable interpersonal relationships. (e.g. *You know, I'd like you to close the window*).

7. Appealer: a lexical or phrasal element that is used by the speaker to appeal to the hearer's understanding. Such expressions function to elicit a hearer's signal. Tag questions are a common form (e.g. *Close the window, will you/ok?*).

Upgraders consist of ten categories according to the CCARP coding manual:

1. Intensifier: an adverb used by a speaker to aggravate the meaning of the utterance (e.g. *I really want you to close the window*).

2. Commitment indicator: a phrase that indicates that the speaker has a high degree of commitment to the state of affairs referred to by the utterance (e.g. *I am sure/certain*).

3. Expletive: a word or phrase used to fill out a sentence without adding to the sense (e.g. '*Close that damn window*').

4. Time intensifier: a phrase that indicates that the request must be fulfilled quickly (e.g. '*Close the window immediately*').

5. Lexical uptoner: a lexical choice that adds negative connotations to a proposition (e.g. *Shut the window*).

6. Determination marker: lexical elements that indicate a high degree of determination on the part of the speaker (e.g. *I have explained myself and that's that*).

7. Repetition of the request: the same request utterance is restated twice (e.g. '*Close the window. Shut that window!*').

8. Orthographic emphasis: using exclamation marks, underlying, italics etc. to achieve dramatic effect (e.g. *Close the window!!*).

9. Emphatic addition: lexical collocations used to provide additional emphasis (e.g. *Go and close the window*).

(10) Pejorative determiner: a determiner expressing contempt or disapproval (e.g. *Close that window!*).

Another part of a request sequence, a supportive move, is used to modify the request Head Act externally. The CCSARP coding manual identifies two types of supportive moves: mitigating supportive moves and aggravating supportive moves. There are 6 types of mitigating supportive moves:

1. Grounder: an utterance in which the speaker states his or her reasons or justifications for making the request (e.g. *Can you close the window? I got very tired at work today*).

2. Imposition minimizer: additional information that the speaker provides in order to reduce the imposition he or she makes by his or her request (e.g. *Can you please close the window, but only if you are planning to go outside*).

3. Preparatory: an utterance, which the speaker uses to check on the addressee's availability to carry out the request (e.g. *Please close the window if you are not busy*).

4. Promise of reward: an utterance in which the speaker promises some compensation in return for the favor done by the addressee (e.g. *I would really appreciate it if you could close the window. I'll give you a thousand thanks*).

5. Disarmer: an utterance in which the speaker tries to anticipate any potential objections the addressee might have (e.g. *I know it probably doesn't feel too cold in the room, but may I ask you to close the window?*).

6. Getting a precommitment: the utterance by means of which the speaker tries to commit his or her addressee before revealing what favor he or she is asking for (e.g. *Can I ask you a big favor? I terribly cold, and I would really appreciate if you closed the window*).

In his dissertation, Dong (2009) adds three additional types of supportive moves to the CCSARP coding manual: compliment, appreciation, and apology.

1. Compliment: an utterance which the speaker uses in order to politely express his or her praise or admiration. Sometimes compliments cannot be explicitly stated (e.g. *I would greatly appreciate it if you would close the window. You are always so helpful*).

2. Appreciation: an utterance in which the speaker expresses his or her gratitude for the anticipated favor (e.g. *I wanted to ask you if you would close the window. I would really appreciate your help*).

3. Apology: an utterance in which the speaker makes an apology to the addressee for the inconvenience (e.g. *I am sorry, but I am so sick. Would you close the window?*).

2.2. Interlanguage request

Form and function of request speech act production is an area of particular

interest of interlanguage pragmatics studies. There are two types of studies on the interlanguage pragmatics of request speech acts: perception studies and production studies.

Studies on the perception of politeness in requests propose that native and non-native speakers similarly perceive the politeness of a request. Walters (1979) showed that advanced English as second language learners have intuitions about the politeness of request speech acts similar to those of native speakers. Tanaka and Kawade (1982) arrived at a similar conclusion; they found a high correlation between perceptions of politeness of request strategies in English as perceived by advanced English learners and native speakers of English. Fraser et al. (1980) found that learners' evaluations of request politeness in their native language was similar to their evaluation of request politeness in the second language. As a result, they suggest that there is no transfer of pragmatic knowledge of the learners' first language to their second language.

The second group of interlanguage pragmatic studies focuses on production of requests by native and non-native speakers. Examining request production by Arabic non-native speakers of English in role-plays, Brunak and Scarcella (1979) concluded that non-native speakers of English have a limited range of politeness features in different contexts. Chen and Chen (2007), in their study of the effect of social distance on the production of requests by Taiwanese learners of English and native English speakers, suggest that there is a general tendency to use conventionally indirect strategies for both native and non-native speakers of English. House and Kasper (1987) in their comparison of English, German and Danish requests with non-native German and Danish requests concluded that non-native speakers use more supportive moves than native speakers.

2.3. Interlanguage email requests in academic settings

In addition to interactions between students and professors in the classroom or during office hours, that there are a number of communicative purposes for which students use email with their professors, many of which involve request speech acts (e.g., asking for a make-up exam, negotiating late work policy, setting up an appointment, requesting additional resources etc.). The research on email requests in academic settings includes studies of email request production by native and non-native speakers and studies of judgments of non-native email requests by native speakers. The production studies examine the linguistic features of the email request used by native and non-native speakers, whereas studies of judgments of non-native email requests by native speakers analyze how the email requests produced by native and non-native speakers are perceived by professors.

Production studies of email requests concluded that native and non-native speakers write emails in different ways. The Hardford and Bardovi-Harlig (1996) study examined request emails sent from students to faculty and concluded that non-native speakers fail to acknowledge the request imposition due to the use of fewer downgraders. The study conducted by Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) also looked at the emails sent from students to their professors. The findings of this study show that native speakers prefer to modify their request Head Acts syntactically, whereas non-native speakers prefer to use lexical internal modifications. Her study also concluded that non-native speakers often overuse a particular semantic construction (e.g. ‘could you...’), which shows that they are lacking the ability to use flexible linguistic means to formulate different types of requests.

Studies of judgments of non-native email requests by native speakers suggest that less elaborate use of external and internal modifications may cause the hearer to be less likely to grant the speaker's request. Hartford and Bardovi-Harling (1996) conducted a study in which they examined the effect of e-mail requests written by native and non-native speakers on faculty. The results of the study suggest that email requests which contained internal and external modifications were more likely to get the hearer to comply with the request. In his study of learners of Russian, Hacking (2008) concluded that the raters would perceive non-native speakers' requests as less socially appropriate if they lacked some elements of the speech act that are crucial to perform a given speech act in a native-like manner. Hendricks (2010) in his study of email requests produced by Dutch learners of English, found that the recipient would evaluate a message negatively if it were lacking elaborate external modifications.

2.4. Theoretical issues addressed in this thesis

As shown in §2.3, substantial research has been conducted on the production and perception of interlanguage email requests in academic settings with speakers of different language. To my knowledge, email requests produced by Brazilian learners of English in academic settings has not been examined. This study analyzes email requests produced by native speakers of American English and Brazilian learners of American in academic settings.

In comparing email requests produced by native and non-native speakers of English, I address several issues raised in the literature on interlanguage request production studies. The first is Chen and Chen's (2007) claim that there is a general

tendency for both native and non-native speakers of English to use conventionally indirect strategies. This thesis analyzes request strategies used by native speakers of English and Brazilian learners of English in order to determine the most preferred request strategy.

The second issue addressed in this study is House and Kasper's (1986) claim that second-language learners use more supportive moves. This thesis compares the types and combinations of supportive moves used by native speakers of English and Brazilian learners of English.

The third issue addressed in this study is Hardford and Bardovi-Harlig's (1996) claim that non-native speakers fail to acknowledge the imposition of the request because they use fewer downgraders. This thesis compares the number of downgraders used by native speakers of English and Brazilian learners of English.

Finally, this study addresses Biesenbach-Lucas's (2007) claim that native speakers prefer to modify their request Head Acts syntactically, whereas non-native speakers prefer to use lexical internal modifications. This thesis identifies the number of syntactic and lexical modifications used by native speakers of English and Brazilian learners of English in order to determine the most preferred type of Head Act internal modifications among these groups.

3. Methodology

This chapter provides an overview of the methodologies used in this study. §3.1 describes the participants of the study. §3.2 explains the data collection method. §3.3 describes the process of analysis of the data collected for this study.

3.1. Participants

After the project received IRB approval (IRB Protocol No., 33-15), I recruited two groups of participants: native and non-native speakers of English. Both groups of participants were pursuing undergraduate or graduate science degrees at the University of Montana in related majors: Pharmacy, Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Science, Microbiology and Medical Technology, Environmental Sciences, Physical Therapy, and Biotechnology/Chemistry.

The survey consisted of three parts. In Part 1 (see Appendix A), the students were asked to state their gender, age, level of study, and major at the University of Montana, if English was their native language, and what languages other than English they had studied. The second part of the survey (see Appendix B) was designed for non-native speakers of English only. In this section, participants were asked to state their native language; their most recent language proficiency scores as well as the date of their last proficiency exam; how long they have been in the U.S.; and how the size of the university they attend at their home country compares to the size of the University of Montana.

The information obtained from the first and the second part of the survey shows that the first group of research participants consisted of 15 NSs, 5 males and 10 females,

aged 18-35. The second group of the research participants consisted of 12 Non-NSs, 5 males and 7 females, aged 18-25.

The Non-NSs in the study on average self-report having 550 points on their recent TOEFL PBT (Test of English as a Foreign Language Paper Based). Such a score puts them in a Vantage level of the language learning achievements identified by the Council of Europe (2001). At this level the learners ‘can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party’ (Council of Europe, 2001, p.24). On average, the Non-NSs have spent 6.6 months in the U.S.

3.2. Data collection

Previous research on email request strategies used in academic settings has utilized two methods of data collection: observation and elicitation. Hardford and Bardovi-Harlig (1996), Biesenbach-Lucas (2007), and Chen (2006) used the observation method, examining email requests sent from students to faculty. Krulatz (2012) took a different approach to the investigation of the email request strategies used in academic settings. In her study of emails written by native and nonnative speakers of Russian, she utilized an elicitation. The participants of her study were asked to imagine themselves in particular scenarios common to university academic settings and then were asked to compose and send email requests to an address created specifically for the purpose of the research.

Basing studies on the observation of email requests has advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, such a method allows the examination of speech acts as

they naturally occur. On the other hand, it is difficult to compare samples of natural speech in terms of situational variables since it is hard to predict the occurrence of a given speech act. For example, it is difficult to collect a large sample of emails that students have written to their professors about a specific request. The collection of naturally occurring data may also be problematic for legal reasons such as the protection of personal information (the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)). Finally, participants may be hesitant to share some of their private communications due to their fear of being judged. Consequently, it is hard for a researcher to obtain access to sufficient data if students are reluctant to share their emails.

Elicitation does not allow for the collection of naturally occurring speech acts used in actual interactions. Nevertheless, this method has its advantages. First of all, it allows for control of contextual variables, which can lead to more methodologically sound analysis. Second, since the participants' privacy is insured by the Institutional Review Board regulations, the method may allow for a larger data sample, which may in turn lead to more reliable generalizations.

In the current study, I use an elicitation method called Discourse Competition Test (DCT). This data elicitation method was developed by Blum-Kulka (1982, following Levenston, 1975) to collect speech acts samples produced by native and non-native speakers of Hebrew. The DCT consists of a series of dialogues representing different social situations. Each dialogue is preceded by a short description of a social situation (including the setting, social roles and status of participants). An incomplete dialogue follows this short description. Participants are asked to complete the dialogue, orally or in writing, in order to produce the speech act under investigation (e.g., request, apology,

etc.). An example dialogue used by Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989) is found in (1).

(1) At the University

Ann missed a lecture yesterday and would like to borrow Judith's notes.

Ann: _____

Judith: Sure, but let me have them back before the lecture next week.

The original DCT was designed to elicit speech acts that occur orally. In this study, the test was modified to allow for the collection of written email request data. Instead of simply filling in a partially completed dialogue, the participants were asked to write an email, imagining themselves in the given social situation.

In this study, the emails were collected as a part of the online survey mentioned in section 3.1. In the third part of the survey, both native and non-native speakers of English were asked to compose two emails to a University of Montana professor in their major according to two scenarios. In the first scenario, the participants were asked to compose an email to a professor requesting an extension on a course assignment whose deadline was approaching. In the second scenario, the participants were asked to compose an email to a professor asking to borrow a book that they know the professor has that is not available in the library.

In the two scenarios, social distance (degree of familiarity) and social power (one participant's institutionalized authority over the other) between the speaker and the hearer is kept constant: in both scenarios the student has to address a professor in his/her major. The single variable distinguishing the two scenarios is the degree of imposition in each request, measured by the time and effort required for the requestee to perform the desired action. In the first scenario, the speaker requires the hearer to spend significant time and

effort to perform the action implied in the request; in the second scenario, the request is relatively easy for the hearer to perform, requiring relatively little time and effort.

I classified the relative degree of imposition in the two scenarios according to my assessment of which requested action was more demanding. To control for the possibility that participants might classify the relative degree of imposition differently, and to avoid potential misinterpretation of the data, the participants were also asked to rate the degree of imposition (defined in the survey as the time and effort required by the professor to perform the desired action) of the requested action in each email on a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 is the lowest imposition and 5 is the highest).

After each email scenario the participants were also asked to identify the amount of time they spent writing each email and to rate the likelihood of them writing such email requests to their professors. The first question was put in the survey in order to evaluate whether time investment correlated with perceived imposition level of the request. The second question was asked to ensure that the scenarios were ones that the students would likely find themselves in.

3.3 Data analysis procedure

Following Chen's (2001) data analysis process of email requests, I conducted two types of analysis: first, analysis of general email textual features such as openings and closings, and second, analysis of constituent parts of the request sequence (Head Acts and supportive moves).

In the analysis of the general email features I follow Chen (2001). She distinguishes two types of general email features: openings and closings. According to Chen (2001), there are four features of email openings:

1. Address terms: words or phrases used for addressing (e.g. *Professor, sir/madam*)
2. Salutations: standard words or phrases used in a letter to greet the person being written to (e.g. *dear, hello*).
3. Self-introductions: utterances that state student's name and/or his/her background information (e.g. *'This is ...'*).
4. Phatic communication: utterances that are used by the speaker to establish or maintain social relationships with the hearer (e.g. *'How are you?', 'Merry Christmas'*).

Among email closings, Chen (2001) distinguishes two features types:

1. Thanks: closing expressions that show the speaker's gratitude to the hearer in advance (e.g. *'Thank you for your attention'*).
2. Complementary closing: expressions that the speaker uses to finish his/her email (e.g. *sincerely, regards*).

In my analysis of email requests, I follow the procedure outlined in the CCSARP coding manual. First, I identify strategies used to compose request Head Act. Second, I look at the request perspective used by the speaker. Finally, I analyze optional syntactic and lexical devices that modify the request Head Act internally. For the analysis of the supportive moves, I use a version of the CCSARP manual adopted by Dong (2009) (see section 2.1). Additionally, I analyze general email features - openings and closings - as proposed by Chen (2001).

4. Results

In this chapter I compare the features of NS and Non-NS email requests in each of the 2 situations. In §4.1, I focus on general email textual features, which include openings and closings. In §4.2, I examine the features of the request Head Act used by NSs and Non-NSs in the two email request situations. These features include: type of request strategy, the request perspective, and several internal modifications. In §4.3, I compare supportive moves used by NSs and Non-NSs in the two email request situations. In §4.4, I compare the two groups in terms of a number of extralinguistic factors such as how they perceive the relative degree of imposition in each requestive situation; how the amount of time spent writing each email correlates with the perceived degree of imposition; and how likely the students believe it is that they would find themselves writing such emails to their professors in the two request situations.

4.1 General email textual features

In this subsection I compare general email textual features. In § 4.1.1, I compare email openings used in NS and Non-NS email requests in each of the 2 situations. In § 4.1.2, I compare email closings used in NS and Non-NS email requests in each of the 2 situations.

4.1.1 Openings

NSs and Non-NSs differed in their use of email openings. Table 2 below shows the distribution of the opening email features in NS and Non-NS emails in each email request situation.

Opening feature		Situation 1		Situation 2	
		NS	Non-NS	NS	BS
Salutations	Dear	5/15	5/12	5/15	4/12
	Hello	0/15	3/12	1/15	3/12
	Hi	2/15	4/13	1/15	5/12
	No salutations	8/15	0/12	8/15	0/12
Address terms	Professor	4/15	6/12	5/15	6/12
	Professor + Last name	4/15	5/12	3/15	5/12
	Dr. + Last name	4/14	1/12	4/15	1/12
	Sir/ma'am	1/15	0/13	1/15	0/12
	No address term	2/15	0/12	2/15	0/12
Self-introduction	Name only	1/15	0/12	0/15	0/12
	Background information only	0/15	5/12	1/15	4/12
	Name + background information	2/15	3/12	2/15	3/12
	No self-introduction	12/15	4/12	12/15	5/12
Phatic communication		0/15	1/12	0/15	0/12

Table 2. Distribution of opening features in NS and Non-NS emails

I first turn my attention to the analysis of salutations. The biggest difference between the NS and Non-NS emails is that all of the Non-NS emails contained salutations, whereas more than half (8/15) the NS emails did not contain any salutation. This difference held for both email request situations. There were few differences between the groups in terms of the form of salutation used. Both groups used the same three forms of salutations: *dear*, *hi*, and *hello*; and each group used *dear* the most.

In my analysis of address terms I identified some slight differences between NS and Non-NS emails. First, all Non-NS emails contained some term of address, whereas in each email request situation, 2/15 NS emails did not contain any form of address. Both

groups used three different kinds of address term: *professor*, *professor + name*, and *Dr. + name*. One NS email in each email request situation contained an additional type of address term: *Sir/ma'am*.

Self-introductions are a more common feature of email openings for Non-NSs than for NSs. In the Non-NS emails, two-thirds (8/12) contained self-introductions in the first situation, and nearly 60% (7/12) contained self-introductions in the second situation, whereas among NS emails, only 13% (2/15) in each situation contained self-introductions. The participants used three types of self-introduction: (1) *name only*, (2) *background information only*, and (3) *name + background information*.

In email request situation 1, Non-NS emails contained two types of self-introduction: *background information only* (5/12), e.g. 'I am attending your Advanced Cell and Molecular Biology class' (HNNS10), and *name + background information* (3/12), e.g. '(21) My name is _____ and I am in your ____ class' (HNNS4). In NS emails, there are two types of self-introductions: *name + background information* (2/15), e.g. 'My name is _____ and I am currently enrolled in your ____ class' (HNS8), and *name only* (1/15), e.g. '...this is _____' (HNS13).

In email request situation 2, both NS and non-NS emails contained two types of self-introduction: *background information only*, and *name + background information*. 1/15 NS and 4/12 Non-NSs provided background information only in the self-introduction, e.g. 'I'm enrolled in your _____ class' (LNNS8). 2/15 NSs and 3/12 Non-NSs provided *name and background information*, e.g. 'My name is Student and I am currently enrolled in your X class' (LNS8).

Only one phatic communication is present and it is in a Non-NS email, e.g. ‘How are you doing?’ (HNNS9).

4.1.2 Closings

NSs and Non-NSs differed in their use of email closings. Table 3 below shows the distribution of the closing email features in NS and Non-NS emails in each email request situation.

Closing features		Situation 1		Situation 2	
		NS	Non-NS	NS	Non-NS
Thank	Totals	12/15	8/12	11/15	6/12
	Time	2/15	1/12	2/15	1/12
	Time + consideration	1/15	1/12	0/15	0/12
	Time + patience	0/15	1/12	0/15	0/12
	Consideration	2/15	0/12	1/15	0/12
	Attention	0/15	2/12	0/15	1/12
	Understanding	1/15	0/12	0/15	0/12
	No reason	6/15	3/12	8/15	4/12
Complimentary closing (e.g. sincerely, best regards).		1/15	4/12	2/15	5/12

Table 3. Distribution of closing features in NS and Non-NS’ emails

According to Table 3, both NSs and Non-NSs show a preference for using the thank closing feature type over the complimentary closing. In NS emails this type of closing is more common than in Non-NS emails. In email request situation 1, 12/15 NSs and 8/12 Non-NSs used a thank closing in their emails. In email request situation 2, 11/15 NSs and 6/12 Non-NSs used a thank closing in their emails.

In email request situation 1, NSs thank their professors for four reasons: time (2/15), consideration (2/15), understanding (1/15), and time and consideration (1/15).

There are also four common reasons given to thank a professor in Non-NS emails:

attention (2/12), time (1/12), time and patience (1/12), time and consideration (1/12). As can be seen from Table 3, Non-NSs tend to give more complex reasons to thank their professors.

In email request situation 2, NSs thank their professors for two reasons: time (2/15), and consideration (1/15). There are also two common reasons to thank a professor in Non-NSs emails: attention (1/12), time (1/12). As can be seen from Table 3, both NSs and Non-NSs tend to give less complex reasons to thank their professors in email request situation 2.

In both email request situations in this study, some NS and Non-NS emails do not explicitly state the reason the speaker is thanking the hearer. In email request situation 1, 6/15 NSs and 3/12 Non-NSs did not explicitly state the reason the speaker is thanking the hearer. In email request situation 2, this number is slightly higher: 8/15 NSs and 4/12 Non-NSs did not explicitly state the reason the speaker is thanking the hearer. The results above show that NSs are more frequently avoid naming the reason for which they thank the hearer.

Complementary closings are more common in Non-NS emails than in NS emails. In email request situation 1, 1/15 NS emails and 4/12 Non-NS emails contained complementary closings. In email request situation 2, 2/15 NS emails and 5/12 Non-NS emails contained complementary closings. NSs tend to write complementary closings only when they do not use a thanks closing feature. In Non-NSs emails the same tendency is observed. Only one email contained both a thanks closing and a complementary closing, e.g. 'Thank you for your time and patience. Best Regards' (HNNS4) and this was in a Non-NS email.

4.2 Request Head Act

In this subsection I compare features of the request Head Act in NS and Non-NS email requests in each of the 2 situations. In § 4.2.1, I compare request strategies used in NS and Non-NS email requests. In § 4.2.2, I analyze the request perspective used in NS and Non-NS email requests in each of the 2 situations. In § 4.2.3, I compare internal modifications used in NS and Non-NS email requests in each of the 2 situations.

4.2.1. Request strategies

In this subsection I compare request strategies used by NS and Non-NS in the 2 email request situations. Table 4 shows the distribution of request strategies in NS and Non-NS emails.

Request strategy	Situation 1		Situation 2	
	NS	Non-NS	NS	Non-NS
Direct	5/15	2/12	1/15	1/12
Performative	0/15	0/12	0/15	1/12
Hedged performative	3/15	2/12	0/15	0/12
Want statement	2/15	0/12	1/15	0/12
Conventionally indirect	9/15	10/12	14/15	10/12
Query preparatory	9/15	10/12	14/15	10/12
Nonconventionally indirect	1/15	0/12	0/15	1/12
Strong hint	1/15	0/12	0/15	1/12

Table 4. Distribution of request strategies in NS and Non-NS' emails

In email request situation 1, the following direct request strategies were distinguished: Hedged performative, e.g., 'I am writing you to ask for a few extra days

for the upcoming assignment' (HNS4); Want statement¹, e.g. 'I am also hoping you would consider giving me an extension' (HNS6). The Want Statement strategy is used only by NSs. Both NSs and Non-NSs used only one type of conventionally indirect strategy – Query Preparatory, e.g. 'I was wondering if it would be possible to have a couple extra days to complete the assignment' (HNS2). Only one type of the nonconventionally indirect strategy is found in the data: Strong Hint, e.g. '...would appreciate an extension' (HNS15).

Table 4 shows that conventionally indirect request strategies are the most preferred by both groups of the research participants in email request situation 1. Conventionally indirect strategies are more common in the Non-NS emails (10/12) than in the NS emails (9/15). The second most common type of request strategies is direct. Direct request strategies are preferred more by NS (5/15) than by Non-NS (2/12). Nonconventionally indirect request strategies are the least common and were found only in one NS email.

In email request situation 2, the following direct request strategies were distinguished: Performative, e.g., 'Please, would [it] be too much if I asked to borrow it from you?' (LNNS9); Want Statement, e.g. 'If at all possible I would like to borrow it' (LNS3). Performative strategy is used in only one Non-NS email and Want Statement strategy is used only in one NS email. Similarly to email request situation 1, both NSs and Non-NSs used only one type of conventionally indirect strategy – Query Preparatory, e.g. 'I was wondering if I would be able to borrow it' (LNS2). Only one type of the

¹ I classify strategies like 'I am also hoping you would consider giving me an extension' (HN6) as want statement strategy since this construction expresses the speaker's desire that the hearer carry out the request. Under a different analysis, this construction may be classified as hedged performative strategy since in this construction, an illocutionary verb denoting a request (e.g. 'give') is modified by a hedged expression (e.g. 'I was hoping you would consider').

nonconventionally indirect strategies was found in the data - Strong Hint, e.g. ‘Do you have any some [sic] extra book? I do appreciate this’ (LNNS12).

Similarly to email request situation 1, Table 4 shows that conventionally indirect request strategies are the most preferred by both groups of research participants in email request situation 2. Conventionally indirect strategies are more common in the NS emails (14/15) than in the Non-NS emails (10/12). In this email situation direct and nonconventionally indirect strategies are rarely used. For example, a direct request strategy was found in only one NS email and in only one Non-NS email. A nonconventionally indirect strategy was found in only one Non-NS email.

4.2.2. Request perspective

In this subsection I compare the request perspective used by NSs and Non-NSs in the 2 email request situations. Table 5 shows the distribution of request perspectives in NS and Non-NS emails.

Request perspective	Situation 1		Situation 2	
	NS	Non-NS	NS	Non-NS
Hearer oriented	3/15	4/12	3/15	9/12
Speaker oriented	10/15	6/12	11/15	3/12
Inclusive	0/15	0/12	0/15	0/12
Impersonal	2/15	2/12	1/15	0/12

Table 5. Distribution of request perspectives in NS and Non-NS emails

Both NS and Non-NS email request contain 3 types of request perspective: (1) hearer oriented, emphasizing the role of the hearer; (2) speaker oriented, focusing on the

role of the speaker; and (3) impersonal, including neither the speaker, nor the hearer. No instances of inclusive request perspective were found in the data analyzed.

In email request situation 1, the following request perspectives were found: hearer oriented, e.g., ‘I am hoping you would consider giving me an extension’ (HNS6); speaker oriented, e.g., ‘I was wondering if I could sent [sic] you the project one week after the deadline’ (HNNS2)²; impersonal, e.g., ‘I was wondering if it would be possible to have a couple of extra days to complete the assignment’ (HNS2).

Table 5 shows that in email request situation 1, both NS and Non-NS prefer to make their requests speaker oriented, though this request perspective is used more by NSs (10/15) than by Non NSs (6/12). The second most common category of request perspective for both groups is hearer oriented: 3/15 for NS and 4/12 for Non-NS. The Impersonal request perspective is the least common. Only 2/15 NS use it and only 2/12 Non-NS use it when composing the request Head Act.

In email request situation 2, the following request perspectives were found: hearer oriented, e.g., ‘I was wondering if you could help me with this problem by borrowing me your book’ (LNNS2); speaker oriented, e.g., ‘I was contacting you to see if I could borrow (book title) to help me with our course paper?’ (LNS8); impersonal, e.g., ‘Would it be possible to borrow or check out your copy of the book?’ (LNS9). No instances of inclusive request perspective were found in the data analyzed.

Table 5 shows that in email request situation 2, NSs prefer to make their requests speaker oriented (11/15). The second most common category of request perspective in

² I also analyze strategies where the request is formed with an infinitive construction as having a speaker-oriented perspective, e.g. ‘I am contacting you to inquire about an extension on the course assignment that was assigned yesterday’ (HAS8). If we decompose the original sequence to its simple constituents we can say ‘I am contacting you...’ and ‘I inquire..’ In both cases the focus is on a speaker’s role.

NSs request Head Acts is hearer oriented (3/15). The Impersonal perspective is used only in one of the request Head Acts in NS emails. On the other hand, Non-NSs show a strong preference (9/12) for the hearer-oriented request perspectives when composing a request Head Act. The speaker-oriented request perspective is used only in three request Head Acts in Non-NSs' emails. Non-NSs did not use the impersonal request perspective when writing a request Head Act.

4.2.3. Internal modifications

In this section the usage and distribution of internal modifications in the Head Act are discussed. All the emails collected from NSs and Non-NSs contain internal modifications in the form of syntactic and lexical downgraders. No instances of upgraders were found. Table 6 shows the distribution of types of syntactic downgraders that modify request Head Act in NS and Non-NS' emails.

Syntactic Modification	Situation 1		Situation 2	
	NS	Non-NS	NS	Non-NS
Interrogative	6/15	2/12	10/15	3/12
Past tense	5/15	4/12	7/15	5/12
Conditional mood	5/15	5/12	7/15	5/12
Progressive aspect	10/15	6/12	9/15	4/12
Conditional clause	0/15	1/12	1/15	0/12
Embedding	12/15	9/12	11/15	9/12
Emphatic 'do'	0/15	0/12	0/15	1/12
Average # of combinations per Head Act	2.5	2.2	3.0	2.2

Table 6. Distribution of syntactic downgraders in NS and Non-NS' emails

The following categories of syntactic downgraders were used by NSs and Non-NSs to modify the request Head Act: *Interrogative*, *Past Tense*, *Conditional mood*, *Progressive Aspect*, *Conditional Clause*, *Embedding*, and *Emphatic 'do'*. The first five categories are identified in the CCSARP coding manual (1989, p.281). During my analysis, I added two additional syntactic downgrading categories: *Embedding* and *Emphatic 'do'*.

According to the CCSARP coding manual (1989, p.281), *Interrogative* is not considered to be downgrading with the Query preparatory strategy. I nevertheless coded it as downgrading since in some instances the Query Preparatory strategy can be a declarative sentence. This shows that the interrogative is optional with this strategy, e.g. 'I was wondering if it would be possible to have a couple extra days to complete the assignment.' (HNS2) and 'Can I push the date until monday [sic]?' (HNN1). In some cases the sentence is not syntactically an interrogative sentence, but the speaker still uses a question mark, e.g. 'I was wondering if I could get an extension on the due date of the assignment?' (HNS10). I coded such sentences as interrogative as well. Non-NSs use a question mark only if the sentence is syntactically interrogative, whereas NSs put question mark at the end of a sentence even though the sentence is syntactically declarative.

I analyzed *Past Tense* and *Progressive Aspect* as downgrading syntactic categories as they appear in the embedding clause. As suggested in the CCSARP (p.282-283), *Past Tense* is only marked as downgrading if it is used with a present time reference (if it can be substituted by the present tense form without changing the semantic meaning of the utterance), e.g., 'I was wondering if you could receive my answers

tomorrow' (HNS10) vs. 'I am wondering if you can receive my answers tomorrow.' The same approach holds for *Progressive Aspect*, which is marked as downgrading if it can be substituted with a simple form, e.g., 'I am also hoping you would consider giving me an extension' (HNS6) vs. 'I hope you would consider giving me an extension'.

I marked the *Conditional Mood* of the verb used for the request realization as downgrading if it can be replaced by an indicative form, e.g. 'I am also hoping you would consider giving me an extension' (HNS6) vs. 'I am hoping you will consider giving me an extension'. I do not consider the verb in a subordinate clause to be in a Conditional Mood when it cannot be replaced by an indicative form. For example, when the main verb of the sentence is in the past tense, the other verbs must also express a past viewpoint, e.g. 'I was wondering if I could send you the project one week after the deadline' (HNNS2). Such phenomenon was analyzed by Declerck (1988), who calls it "Sequence of Tenses" (SoT) rule. Declerck (1988) explains that according to the SoT, when the introductory verb is in the past tense, the verb in the subordinate clause 'automatically backshifts the tense forms' (p. 513). In other words, it is required that the tense of the subordinate clause should agree with the past tense of a main clause.

A *Conditional clause* was found in only one NS's email, i.e., 'If it is at all possible I would like to borrow it' (LNS3) and one Non-NS' email, e.g. 'If I do not be [sic] able to finish it until its due date, is that possible I have an extra time to finish it?' (HNNS11).

I added an additional syntactic downgrading category called *Embedding*. This term is used by Trosborg (1995 p. 211) to refer to a clause in which the request is embedded. Such clauses, according to Trosborg, convey the speaker's attitude to the

request by expressing tentativeness, hope, delight, thanks, etc. I extend the original meaning of this category and code each clause in which the request is embedded as a syntactic downgrader called Embedding, e.g. ‘I am contacting you to inquire about an extension on the course assignment that was assigned yesterday’ (HNS8).

Emphatic ‘do’ downgrader was found only in one Non-NS’ email when a request was realized with a help of a *Strong hint* strategy, e.g. ‘I do appreciate this’ (LBS12).

Table 6 shows that in most request Head Acts the syntactic devices mentioned above were used in combination. In both email request situations, NSs tend to use slightly more complex combinations of syntactic downgraders than Non-NSs. For example, in email request situation 1, on average NSs use 2.5 syntactic downgraders per Head Act, whereas Non-NSs use 2.2 syntactic downgraders per Head Act on average. Similarly, in email request situation 2, NSs tend to use more complex combinations of syntactic downgraders than Non-NSs. For instance, on average, NSs use 3.0 syntactic downgraders per Head Act, whereas Non-NSs use only 2.2 syntactic downgraders per Head Act.

Some request Head Acts in both NSs and Non-NSs emails are also internally modified by lexical and phrasal downgraders. Table 7 shows the distribution of categories of lexical and phrasal downgraders that modify the request Head Act in NS and Non-NS emails.

Lexical and Phrasal Downgraders	Situation 1		Situation 2	
	NS	Non-NS	NS	Non-NS
Politeness Marker	0/15	1/12	3/15	1/12
Understater	7/15	3/12	2/15	1/12
Total number	7/15	4/12	5/15	2/12

Table 7. Distribution of lexical and phrasal downgraders in NS and Non-NS emails

The email data consists of only two types of lexical downgraders: *Politeness Marker* and *Understater*. There is only one Non-NS email that used a Politeness marker, e.g. ‘Please, I am writing to ask you if I could handle [sic] that assignment due to next Friday on the following class’ (HNNS9). NS emails contain only Understaters e.g. ‘I was wondering if it would be possible to have a couple extra days to complete the assignment’ (HNS2).

The data shows that lexical and phrasal downgraders are slightly more preferred by NSs than by Non-NSs. For example, in email request Situation 1, 7 NSs’ emails contained lexical and phrasal downgraders, whereas 4 Non-NSs emails contained lexical and phrasal downgraders. Similarly, in email request Situation 2, 5 NSs’ emails contained lexical and phrasal downgraders, whereas only 2 Non-NSs emails contained lexical and phrasal downgraders.

In most request Head Acts the syntactic and lexical downgraders were used in combination. Table 8 shows the average number of syntactic and lexical downgraders per Head Act.

	Situation 1	Situation 2
NS	3	3.4
Non-NS	2.5	2.4

Table 8. Average number of syntactic and lexical downgraders per Head Act.

In both email request situations, NSs tend to use slightly more complex combinations of syntactic and lexical downgraders per Head Act than Non-NSs. For example, in email situation 1, NSs use 3 syntactic and lexical downgraders per Head Act, whereas Non-NSs use 2.5 syntactic and lexical downgraders per Head Act. Similarly, in

email situation 1, NSs use 3.4 syntactic and lexical downgraders per Head Act, whereas Non-NSs use 2.4 syntactic and lexical downgraders per Head Act.

4.3 Supportive moves

In this section I analyze supportive moves which NSs and Non-NSs use to modify the request Head Act externally. All of the NS and Non-NS requests are modified by supportive moves. Table 9 below shows the distribution of categories of supportive moves in NS and Non-NS emails.

Supportive moves	Situation 1		Situation 2	
	NS	Non-NS	NS	Non-NS
Grounders	15/15	12/12	14/15	9/12
Appreciations	3/15	1/12	4/15	0/12
Apologies	2/15	1/12	0/15	0/12
Disarmers	3/15	1/12	10/15	10/12
Promise	1/15	0/12	0/15	0/12
Understanding	0/15	3/12	0/15	2/12
Imposition Minimizer	0/15	0/12	1/15	0/12
Hope	0/15	0/12	1/15	0/12
Average # of combinations per email	1.6	1.5	2.0	1.75

Table 9. The distribution of supportive moves in NS and Non-NS emails.

The most common type of supportive move used by both groups of the participants in the two email request situations was *Grounders*. Grounders are a type of supportive move which subjects use to justify their requests. All emails collected from NSs and Non-NSs in email request situation 1 contained grounders. There are four groups of justifications employed in this study: (1) sickness, (2) death of a family member, (3) difficulty with completing the assignment, and (4) other commitments. Table 10 below

shows the distribution of these groups of justification in NS and Non-NS email request in situation 1.

	NS	Non-NS
Sickness	4/15	3/12
Death of a family member	5/15	0/12
Difficulty with completing the assignment	1/15	5/12
Other commitments	5/15	4/12

Table 10. Distribution of types of grounders in NSs and Non-NSs emails in Situation 1

Table 10 shows that NSs and Non-NSs use these groups of grounders with different frequency. NSs justify their requests by saying that they need an extension on the course assignment due to their sickness, death of a family member, or other commitments. NSs rarely state that they experienced difficulty with completing the course assignment. On the other hand, Non-NSs state that they need an extension on the course assignment due to their sickness, difficulty with completing the assignment, or other commitments. Non-NSs never provide death of a family member as a reason for needing an extension on the course assignment.

In email request situation 2, 13/15 NS emails and 9/12 Non-NSs emails contained grounders. There are four groups of justifications employed in this study: (1) additional practice/reading, (2) help with the course material, (3) help with completing the course assignment, and (4) being unwilling to buy the book. Table 11 below shows the distribution of these groups of justification in NSs and Non-NSs email request in situation 2.

	NS	Non-NS
Additional practice/reading	4/15	2/12
Help with the course material	3/15	2/12
Help with completing the course assignment	6/15	4/12
Not willing to buy the book	0/15	1/12

Table 11. Distribution of types of grounders in NSs and Non-NSs emails in Situation 2

Table 11 shows that NSs and Non-NSs use these groups of grounders with similar frequency. Most commonly NSs and Non-NSs justify their request for a book due to the need for help with completing the course assignment, e.g., ‘I need [to] read some chapters of the book to do the assignment’ (LNNS4). The second most popular type of grounder for both NSs and Non-NSs is the grounder that justifies the request due to the desire for additional practice/reading, e.g., ‘I am really interested in study [sic] more about XX, and the book A has some useful information’ (LNNS11). The third type of grounder used by NSs and Non-NSs is the one that justifies the request due to the need for help with the course material, e.g., ‘As an international student, I like to read the material before classes because it helps me understand the language better’ (LNNS6). During the data analysis I identified an additional type of a grounder, which justifies the request, due to the fact that the students does not think he/she should buy the book, e.g. ‘Besides, I don't think is a good idea for me to buy this book now, because soon I'll have to come back to my country and I won't use it there’ (LBS3). This type of a grounder was found only in one Non-NS email.

Occasionally, emails in both email request situations contain additional supportive moves in the form of appreciations, apologies, disarmers, promises, understanding, imposition minimizers, and hope statements. In email request situation 1, there are three types of additional supportive moves. First, 2 NSs and 1 Non-NS email contained an apology, e.g., ‘I am really sorry for asking you for that extension on [sic] time’ (HNNS9). Second, 2 NSs and 1 Non-NSs emails contained a disarmer, e.g. ‘I am aware that your evaluation on my assignment would be according to the more time I had to write it, comparing to other students’ (HNNS9). Third, 2 NSs and 1 Non-NS emails contain appreciation, e.g. ‘I would greatly appreciate it’ (HNS3).

In emails written by the participants in request situation 2, I found two types of supportive moves that are not mentioned either in the CCSARP coding manual, or in Dong (2009). The first type has a reference to a promise that the situation will not happen again, e.g. ‘I will try my best not to get in this situation again’ (HNS14). This type was only found in one NS email. The second type of supportive move has a reference to the situation when the speaker stated that he or she understands if a professor is not going to grant his request, e.g. ‘If it is not possible I'll completely understand’ (HBS8). This type of supportive move was only found in 3 Non-NS emails.

In email request situation 2, the most common type of additional supportive move in NS and Non-NS emails was the disarmer, e.g., ‘When I checked in the library it was not available’ (LAS2). 10/15 NSs and 10/12 Non-NSs used this type of supportive move as an additional external modification.

NSs emails are also additionally modified by appreciation and imposition minimizers. For example, 4 NS emails contain an appreciation minimizer, e.g., ‘I would

really appreciate it' (LNS10). One NS email also contains an imposition minimizer, e.g. I would only need it for a week (LNS3).

During the data analysis of emails in request situation 2, an additional type of supportive move, the hope statement, was found in one NS email, e.g. 'I hope you consider my request' (LNS14). Such a supportive move is not mentioned either in the CCSARP coding manual, or in Dong (2009).

Non-NS emails are also additionally modified by an understanding statement, e.g. 'If it is not possible for me to do this, I understand' (LNNS2). Only two non-NSs emails contained this type of supportive move.

As with internal modifications, emails from both groups of students contained combinations of different types of supportive moves. The number of internal modifications used by NSs and Non-NS per clause in each email request situation was similar. In email request situation 1, on average NS requests contained 1.6 supportive moves per clause, and Non-NS requests contained 1.5 supportive moves per clause. In email request situation 2, both NS and Non-NS requests contained a slightly larger number of supportive moves per clause. On average, NS requests contained 2.0 supportive moves per clause, and Non-NS requests contained 1.75 supportive moves per clause.

4.4 Extra-linguistic factors

In order to better understand the differences in linguistic choices the participants made in the two different request situations, the participants were asked to rate the weight of the imposition in each requestive situation, as well as how much time they spent

writing each email, and how likely they were to write an email to their professor in each request situation. When rating the weight of the imposition in each requestive situation the participants were asked to determine the time and effort they thought would be required by the professor to perform the desired action. They were given a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest imposition and 5 the highest. After rating the weight of an imposition in each email request, the participants were asked to estimate the amount of time they spent writing each email. After this, the participants were asked to rate the likelihood of their writing each email request to their professor. Table 12 below shows the comparison of the above extralinguistic factors as rated by NS and Non-NS speakers in both email request situations.

Extra-linguistic factors	Situation 1		Situation1	
	NS	Non-NS	NS	Non-NS
Mean weight of an imposition (on the scale from 1 to 5)	2.9	3.0	2.4	3.0
Average amount of time students spent writing the email (in minutes)	3.5	4.6	2.5	4.0
Mean likelihood of students writing an email to their professor (on the scale from 1 to 5)	2.9	2.5	3.3	3.0

Table 12. Comparison of extra-linguistic factors in NS and Non-NS's emails.

As shown in Table 12, NS and Non-NS rated the relative imposition in the two email request situation differently. While NSs rated Situation 1 as having a higher imposition (2.9) than Situation 2 (2.4), Non-NSs gave a similar rating of the weight of the imposition (3.0) in both email request situation.

Table 12 also shows that NSs and Non-NSs spent different amount of time writing each email request. On average, NSs and Non-NSs tend to spend more time

writing the email request in Situation 1 than in Situation 2. Non-NSs tend to spend more time writing email requests than NSs. For example, in email request in Situation 1, on average NSs spend 3.4 minutes writing an email whereas Non-NSs spend 4.6 minutes on average. In email request in Situation 2, NSs spend on average 2.5 minutes writing an email whereas Non-NSs spend 4.0 minutes on average.

As for participants' assessment of the likelihood of their writing such an email to their professor in each request situation, Table12 shows that both groups of participants are more likely to write an email asking a professor to lend them a book than asking for an extension on a course assignment. On average, Non-NSs are slightly less likely to write an email request in each situation. For example, in email request in Situation 1, the mean likelihood of Non-NSs writing an email request is slightly lower (2.5) than that of NSs (2.9). In email request in Situation 2, the mean likelihood of Non-NSs writing an email request is also slightly lower (3.0) than that of NSs (3.3).

5. Discussion

In this chapter I compare the results of the observed linguistic features in email requests produced by NSs and Non-NSs. In §5.1, I discuss the usage of general email textual features, such as openings and closings. In §5.2, I discuss the usage of linguistic features of email request Head Acts. In §5.3, I discuss the usage of supportive moves that the participants used to modify request Head Acts externally. In §5.4, I discuss extralinguistic factors that might have had an effect on the participants' choice of specific linguistics forms and strategies employed by the participants of this study.

5.1. General email textual features

In the study, NS and Non-NS participants differed with respect to their use of openings and closings. In §5.1.1, I discuss the distribution of email opening features in NS and Non-NS emails. In §5.1.1, I discuss the distribution of email closing features in NS and Non-NS emails.

5.1.1. Openings

Email opening features examined in this study include: salutations, address terms, self-introductions and phatic communications. The analysis of salutations revealed that all of the Non-NS emails contained salutations, whereas more than a half (16 of the 30) of NS emails did not contain any salutations. The analysis of address terms showed that all Non-NS emails contained some term of address, whereas 4 of the 30 NS emails did not contain any forms of address. The comparison of self-introductions used by NSs and

Non-NSs showed that these email opening features are more common among Non-NSs than NSs.

The results of analyzing email opening features show that Non-NSs tend to be more formal than NSs. The fact that Non-NSs are more formal might have either a positive or negative effect on the email recipient depending on the already-established professor/student relationships in the class. For example, if a professor prefers being called by his/her first name and in general establishes informal relationships with the students, overt formality of email opening might make him/her feel as though the email is too polite and thus somewhat imposing. On the other hand, if professors prefer at least some level of formality, the avoidance of salutations, address terms, and self-introductions might lead the professor to think that the student is not polite enough and is not acknowledging his/her social status as a professor.

5.1.2. Closings

Email closing features examined in this study were analyzed according to Chen (2001) and include: *thank* closings and *complimentary* closings. Danet (2002) uses a different categorization. She distinguishes closings (e.g. ‘sincerely,’ ‘sincerely yours’) from pre-closings (e.g. ‘thank you very much,’ ‘I look forward to hearing from you’). Danet (2002) suggests that in formal letters closings are usually preceded by pre-closings. The data analysis shows that both NSs and Non-NSs write closings only when they do not use pre-closings.

The analysis of thank closings in NS and Non-NS emails across the two different request situations revealed that NSs and Non-NSs prefer to use thank closings. Such

results might be influenced by the fact that the use of complimentary closings might be perceived as too formal in the two email request situations in this study in which participants were asked to write an email to a professor in their major. It is likely that the participants already knew their professors well enough to avoid using such formal email closing features as ‘sincerely’ or ‘faithfully’. Interestingly, formal email closings are more common in Non-NS emails than in NS emails, which suggests that Non-NSs tend to retain their slightly greater preference for more formal general email textual features.

In both email request situations in this study, some NS and Non-NS emails do not explicitly state the reason for thanking the hearer. The results above show that NSs less frequently name the reason for which they thank the hearer. This shows that Non-NSs truly express their gratitude to the hearer in their thank closing features, since they provide elaborate reasons for their gratitude. On the contrary, NSs use thank closing more as a form of an informal complimentary closings because they tend to omit naming the reason for which they express gratitude to the hearer.

5.2. Request Head Act

In this section, I discuss the usage of linguistic features of email request Head Acts. In §5.2.1, I discuss request strategies used by NSs and Non-NSs. In §5.2.2, I discuss request perspectives used by NSs and Non-NSs. In §5.2.3, I discuss internal modifications that NS and Non-NSs use to modify request head acts internally.

5.2.1. Request strategy

As shown in §4.2.1, conventionally indirect request strategies are greatly

preferred by both NS and NonNS in both email request situations. This result supports Chen and Chen's (2007) claim that there is a general tendency to use conventionally indirect strategies for both native and non-native speakers of English. Blum-Kulka (1987) explains that the tendency to use conventionally indirect strategies is due to the fact that such request strategies are perceived as the most polite because they satisfy "the need for pragmatic clarity and the need to avoid coerciveness" (p. 131). In other words, in case of conventionally indirect strategies, the speaker's intentions are clear due to the socially acceptable use of such strategies to formulate the request. On the other hand, the request is less imposing than in direct request strategies since the speaker does not explicitly state that he/she is requesting something. Blum-Kulka (1987) claims that the shift in balance either in favor of pragmatic clarity or non-coerciveness (in the case of hints) decreases the politeness of request. That is why direct request strategies are impolite: the speaker explicitly states that he/she is making a request and thus is being coercive. In the case of nonconventionally indirect request strategies, the speaker's intention is not pragmatically clear and thus might be perceived as impolite.

5.2.2. Request perspective

The results of my analysis of the request perspective in email request Head Acts in this study allows for different interpretations. Under the first interpretation, the choice of the request perspective can be interpreted as a function of who will typically have to perform the action entailed in the request. Such an analysis is proposed by Biesenbach-Lucas (2007). For example, for the first email request situation in this study, the participant was asked to write an email to their professor requesting an extension on a

course assignment. Such a request can be said to presuppose a speaker-oriented perspective; even though the professor is the one who grants the extension, the participant still needs to complete and submit the work. In the second situation, the participant asks their professor to lend them a book. This request could presuppose a hearer-oriented perspective, since the hearer is the primary actor of the lending action. On the other hand, this type of request could also presuppose a speaker-oriented perspective, since the participant could be considered the primary actor of the borrowing event.

In the first email request situation, both NS and Non-NS prefer to make their requests speaker-oriented, which is expected. In email request situation 2, NSs prefer to use a speaker-oriented perspective, which supports the prediction that the request can be formed with a focus on the participant as the primary actor of a borrowing activity. On the other hand, Non-NSs show a strong preference for hearer-oriented request perspectives in situation 2. This supports the prediction that requests can be formed with a focus on the hearer as the primary actor of lending activity.

Under a different interpretation, a speaker-oriented perspective can be viewed as more polite because it avoids naming the hearer as an actor. Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) suggest that focusing on the speaker as an actor can reduce the level of imposition in the request. Under such interpretation, the expected request perspective and lower level of imposition coincide in email request situation 1. In this situation the expected request perspective is speaker-oriented which is perceived as less imposing than a hearer-oriented perspective according to Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) analysis. In situation 2, the two different interpretations may or may not coincide. For example, if the hearer is emphasized as the primary actor of the lending event, the request may be understood as

more imposing according to Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) analysis. On the other hand, if the speaker is emphasized as a primary actor of a borrowing event, the request may be understood as less imposing than the request with a hearer-oriented perspective.

The fact that both NS and Non-NS prefer to make their requests in situation 1 speaker-oriented reflects the above prediction that expected request perspective coincides with the lower level of imposition. In email request situation 2, NSs prefer to make their requests speaker-oriented, which supports the expected request perspective prediction and also maintains the lower level of coerciveness. On the other hand, Non-NSs in situation 2 show a strong preference for hearer-oriented request perspectives when composing a request Head Act. This shows that even though some Non-NSs conform to one of the expected request perspectives, they are not conforming to the Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) analysis of speaker-oriented request as less imposing.

Finally, the Non-NSs choice of request perspective can be influenced by the transfer of grammatical rules from their native language. As mentioned earlier, all Non-NSs in this study are native speakers of Brazilian Portuguese. In Brazilian Portuguese, there is only one verb that expresses lending/borrowing activity – ‘*emprestar*’ which means ‘*to lend*’. Thus a sentence such as ‘*Can I borrow your book?*’ would be formed in Brazilian Portuguese as in (1) below:

(1) ¿Você pode me emprestar seu livro?

You can me lend your book

‘*Can you lend me your book?*’

Such construction allows the speaker to form a request with a speaker oriented perspective. Hence, I argue that Non-NSs in this study overwhelmingly prefer to form their request using speaker oriented perspective in email request situation 2 due to the transfer from their native language. This claim can be supported by the fact that Non-NSs in this study frequently make grammatical errors when writing email requests in email request situation 2, e.g. ‘I am sending this email to ask, if possible, if you can borrow [sic] me your book about the subject’ (LNNS4).

5.2.3. Internal modifications

The results of internal modifications in the request Head act show that in both email request situations NSs and Non-NSs used syntactic and lexical downgraders. In most request Head Acts, syntactic downgraders were used in combination, which supports Faerch and Kasper’s (1989) generalization that the tendency towards complexity in the use of syntactic modifiers reflects a need to mitigate the force of a request imposition. On average NSs tend to use slightly more complex combinations of syntactic downgraders than Non-NSs in both email request situations. On the other hand, lexical and phrasal downgraders were not used in combination with each other and are less frequent in use in the email request Head Act than syntactic downgraders. The data shows that lexical and phrasal downgraders are slightly more preferred by NSs than by Non-NSs.

The above results do not support Biesenbach-Lucas’s (2007) claim that native speakers prefer to modify their request Head Acts syntactically, whereas non-native speakers prefer to use lexical internal modifications.

When syntactic and lexical/phrasal downgraders were analyzed in combination with each other in both email request situations, the results show that NSs tend to use more complex combinations of syntactic and lexical downgraders per request Head Act than Non-NSs. Such results support Hardford and Bardovi-Harlig's (1996) claim that non-native speakers fail to acknowledge the imposition of the request due to the use of fewer downgraders. This suggests that it is possible that emails composed by Non-NSs might be perceived as more imposing by the e-mail recipients due to the fact that Non-NS emails contain fewer downgraders.

One additional interesting result was revealed during the analysis of NS and Non-NS use of internal modifications. In some cases, participants used a question mark at the end of request Head Acts that did not have the syntactic form of a question. Interestingly, Non-NSs use a question mark only if the sentence is syntactically interrogative, whereas NSs included a question mark at the end of a sentence even though the sentence is syntactically declarative. This contrast can be explained by the fact that NSs currently use a question mark more as a pragmatic device than as a punctuation mark when composing email request Head Acts. For example, NSs might add a question mark at the end of a request head act that was composed with a help of a Query Preparatory strategy even though the request is composed in the form of a declarative sentence. In this case the speaker might want to make it clear that the utterance is indeed a request even though usually a Query Preparatory strategy is conventionally used to form a request.

5.3 Supportive moves

The most common type of supportive move used by both participant groups in the

two email request situations was a *Grounder*. Similar results were found in other studies (e.g. House & Kasper, 1987). Faerch and Kasper (1989) explain that the preference for the use of grounders to modify the request Head Act externally is due to the fact their use is the most efficient mitigating strategy. They state that it is the most effective mitigating supportive move because it provides reasons, justifications, and explanations for a request and thus “opens an empathetic attitude on the part of the interlocutor in giving his or her insights into the author’s underlying motives” (p. 239). Indeed, in situation 1 most of the participants stated that they needed an extension on the course assignment due to an illness or other commitments. In email request situation 2, participants justified their need to borrow a book by explaining that they required additional practice or help with completing the course assignment. These types of elaborations on the part of the speaker help the professor understand the participant’s needs better and thus might cause him or her to be more receptive to granting the speaker’s request.

Similar to the use of internal modifications discussed above, both NS and Non-NS emails contained combinations of different types of supportive moves. The number of internal modifications used by NSs and Non-NS per cause in each email request situation was similar. Such results do not support House and Kasper’s (1987) claim that Non-NSs use more supportive moves. Instead, these results show that both NSs and Non-NSs are equally aware of the need to ‘explicitly establish rather than presuppose common ground’ (Faerch and Kasper, 1989) through use of external mitigating devices.

5.4 Extra-linguistic factors

The analysis of extra-linguistic factors helps account for some of the linguistic features of NS and Non-NS emails. For example, NSs and Non-NSs rated the weight of the imposition of the two email request situations differently. While NSs rated Situation 1 as having a higher imposition (2.9) than Situation 2 (2.4), Non-NSs rated of the weight of the imposition the same (3.0) in both email request situations and rated both as higher than NSs. This suggests that NSs and Non-NSs have different perceptions of the weight of the imposition across email situations. While NSs view the request for an extension on a course assignment as requiring more time and effort on the part of the hearer, Non-NSs perceive these two email request situations as requiring equal time and effort from the hearer.

The results of the analysis of the participants' self-reported estimate of the amount of time they spent writing each email request shows that on average, Non-NSs tend to spend more time than NSs writing email requests in both situations. A possible explanation for such results is that Non-NSs tend to need more time to compose emails due to the fact that they are writing in their second language and thus need more time to draw on linguistic recourses, which they can employ in request realization.

On average, NSs and Non-NSs tend to spend more time writing an email request for Situation 1 than for Situation 2. This result is consistent with the NSs rating of the weight of imposition of each situation since they rated situation 1 as more imposing than email request in situation 2. On the other hand, the results are not consistent with the Non-NSs' imposition ratings. Non-NSs rated the imposition in situation 1 and 2 as equal. However, Non-NSs tend to spend more time writing a request for situation1 than for

situation 2. Such results suggest that the imposition in email request in situation 1 is greater than in situation 2.

The inconsistency of the Non-NS ratings of imposition and the self-reported estimates of the amount of time spent writing each email request suggests two possible explanations. Under the first explanation, the Non-NSs did not understand the meaning of the term imposition or probably did not read the definition of *imposition* provided in the instructions for this question. That is why Non-NSs did not have a clear understanding of what they were asked to rate and thus decided to give similar rating to both email request situations. Under the second explanation, Non-NSs might indeed interpret the imposition of each email request situation as similar due to the fact that for them any occasion of email writing is viewed as imposing.

Participants' assessment of the likelihood of their writing an email to their professor for each situation shows that both participant groups are more likely to write an email asking a professor to lend them a book than asking for an extension on a course assignment. This is consistent with the NS imposition rating in each email request situation. In other words, the fact that NSs are more likely to ask their professor to lend them a book is likely due to the fact that this type of request is perceived by them as less imposing. On the other hand, Non-NSs' perception of imposition in each request situation is not consistent with the likelihood of them writing each request. For example, even though Non-NSs rate the imposition in situation 1 and 2 as equal, they are more likely to write an email asking their professor to lend them a book. This inconsistency might suggest that the Non-NS rating of an imposition might be distorted by the fact that they did not understand the meaning of the term *imposition* or probably did not read the definition

of imposition provided in the instructions for this question. As a result the participants rated the degree of imposition in each request situation as the same.

The participants' assessment of the likelihood of their writing an email to their professor for each situation also shows that on average Non-NSs are slightly less likely to write an email request in each situation. This tendency can be explained by the fact that Non-NS are either trying to avoid situations where they have to request an extension on the course assignment or a situation where they have to ask their professor to lend them a book. Such results can be also explained by the fact that the participants are more likely to make a verbal request in such situations (e.g. ask a professor to give an extension on a course assignment or to lend them a book during the office hour or after class).

6. Conclusion

In this chapter I first summarize the findings and analysis of this thesis (§6.1). I then discuss the implications of this research (§6.2), address some limitations of this thesis project (§6.3), and describe some issues for further research raised by this analysis (§6.4).

6.1. Summary

In this thesis I investigated linguistic features of email requests produced by native and non-native speakers of English in academic settings. In my analysis I focused on general email textual features, the linguistic features of email request Head Acts, and supportive moves.

The analysis of general email textual features showed that Non-NSs differ from NSs in their use of email opening and closing features. Specifically, Non-NSs tend to be more formal than NSs in their email openings. The analysis of email closing features revealed that Non-NSs are more likely than NSs to use formal email closings such as ‘sincerely’ and ‘regards’, again suggesting that Non-NSs have a slightly greater preference for more formal general email textual features. When thank closing features were used, NSs were keener to avoid naming the reason for which they thank the hearer, whereas Non-NSs tended to provide more elaborate reasons for their gratitude. Such a tendency tends to make Non-NSs emails more formal.

The analysis of email request Head Acts focused on email request strategies, request perspectives, and internal modifications used by NSs and Non-NS. Both groups of participants prefer to use the conventionally indirect request strategies in both email

request situations. Blum-Kulka (1987) explains that, on one hand, such a tendency is due to the fact that such request strategies make it possible to make the speaker's intentions clear using a socially acceptable strategy to formulate the request. At the same time, conventionally indirect strategies according to Blum-Kulka (1987) are less imposing than the direct request strategies since the speaker does not explicitly state that he/she is requesting something. NSs and Non-NSs differ in their use of request perspectives. In both email situations, NSs tended to follow the expected request perspective and also maintain a lower level of coerciveness whereas Non-NSs tended to conform to the expected request perspective, but disregarded the level of request coerciveness. The analysis of internal email request modifications showed that both groups of research participants preferred to use combinations of syntactic and/or lexical/phrasal downgraders to lower the level of imposition in each email request situation. Non-NS emails contained fewer downgraders, which, as suggested by (Hardford and Bardovi-Harlig, 1996), might make Non-NS email requests more imposing.

The analysis of supportive moves showed that the most common type used by both groups of the participants in the two email request situations was *Grounder*. This type of supportive move is reported by Faerch and Kasper (1989) as the most effective since it helps a hearer understand the speaker's needs better and thus might make the hearer more open to granting the speaker's request. Both NS and Non-NS emails contained combinations of different types of supportive moves. The number of internal modifications used by NSs and Non-NSs per clause in each email request situation was also similar, suggesting that both groups of participants are equally aware of the need to mitigate the request imposition externally.

Additionally, I analyzed extralinguistic factors such as the participants' rating of the degree of imposition in each email request, the amount of time participants spent writing each email request, and the likelihood of them writing such an email request in each situation. The results of my analysis showed that NSs perceive the imposition in email request situation 1 as higher than in email request situation 2; they spent more time writing the email request in situation 1; and they reported being less likely to write an email request in situation 1 than in situation 2. On the other hand, Non-NSs rate imposition in both email request situations equally, but spent more time writing the email request in situation 1 than in situation 2, and they reported being less likely to write an email request in situation 1 than in situation 2. The inconsistency in Non-NS results might suggest that Non-NS rating of an imposition of email request might be distorted by the fact that they did not understand the meaning of the term *imposition* or probably did not read the definition of imposition provided in the instructions for this question. The fact that both groups tended to spend slightly more time writing the email request in situation 1 and that both groups reported being more likely to write email requests in situation 2 than in situation 1, suggests that the two email request situations were felt to have an unequal degree of imposition. The email request for an extension on a course assignment was perceived as slightly more imposing than the request for borrowing a book. Nevertheless, such perceived differences in the degree of imposition was not enough to trigger differences in the use of linguistic features in the two email requests.

6.2. Implications

The results of my study suggest that even though the Non-NSs in this study have an upper-intermediate level of proficiency in English, which suggests that they have developed knowledge of lexical and grammatical features of the language used in different everyday situations, they still tend to differ from NSs in their use of linguistic forms in email request. In order to achieve a native level of politeness in the email requests, Non-NSs need to use greater syntactic and lexical complexity in their use of internal modifications, learn that speaker request perspective is less imposing, and use slightly less formal opening and closing email features.

Kasper and Rose (2002) state that in order to achieve a native-like politeness Non-NSs need to have ‘a highly developed control of processing’ (2002, p. 26). This suggests that that it not enough for Non-NSs to know a wide range of lexical and syntactic devices. They also need to know how to appropriately use lexical and syntactic devices in different contexts. Bachman (1990) calls such a level of language knowledge a pragmatic competence. Alcón and Martínez-Flor (2008, p. 3) divides pragmatic competence into two components: pragmalinguistic knowledge and sociopragmatic knowledge. Pragmalinguistic knowledge is associated with the knowledge of the routines and forms of particular speech acts, and sociopragmatic knowledge is associated with contextual factors affecting the appropriateness of particular linguistic forms.

The above generalization suggests that academic preparation programs for Non-NSs should not only focus on the development of syntactical and lexical knowledge of the students, but should also introduce students to the appropriate contextual use of these

devices. In other words, ESL instructors should show a range of contextual situations where appropriate linguistic features and their combinations can be used.

6.3. Limitations and issues for further research

It is important to note that this project has a number of limitations. First, the goal of the project was to see how NSs and Non-NSs linguistically acknowledge the different level of imposition in two email request situations. The data analysis revealed no significant difference in linguistic choices employed by the participants in email request situation 1 and email request situation 2. Email request situation 1 was predicted to have a higher degree of imposition due to the fact that a request of an extension on the course assignment requires a professor to bend the rules (e.g. syllabus) and adjust time to accommodate the student. Email request situation 2 was predicted to have a lower degree of imposition since a professor is not required to bend the rules or adjust his/her time to lend a book to a speaker. Thus it was expected that participants' email requests in situation 1 would exhibit more politeness features than email requests in situation 2. As the data analysis shows, the prediction did not hold true.

The fact that neither NSs nor Non-NSs used more politeness features in email request in situation 1 than in situation 2 could be due to the fact that the participants saw the imposition in the two email request situations as similar. Another possible explanation is that the difference in level of imposition is not enough to trigger differences in the usage of linguistic features of email requests. Social power and social distance could be more significant factors that trigger the use of different linguistic devices in email requests.

Another limitation of this study is that the data analysis could be influenced by the coding used in this study. During the data analysis in this study I had to face a number of coding challenges. For example, when coding request Head Act strategies, in some cases it was hard to decide on a category for some syntactic constructions and lexical elements in participants' emails since the CCSARP coding manual does not address coding for those constructions (e.g. constructions such as 'I am hoping you would'). While analyzing the request perspective in the email data, I also came across some constructions in my data that were not represented in the original coding manual (e.g., coding perspective in the infinitive constructions).

The limitations of this project outline issues for further research. First of all, further studies could analyze email opening features, request Head Acts, and supportive moves in email requests in which the level of imposition is more distinct. For example, politeness features of emails where participants ask their professors to see them during office hours versus politeness features of emails where participants ask their professors to make up an exam could be examined. If the results of such studies also revealed no significant difference in linguistic choices employed by the participants, further studies could look at the email requests where social power and social distance between the speaker and the hearer is different (e.g., request between the student and a school administrator).

Since the CCSARP coding manual that was used to code email requests in this study was originally developed for the analysis of requests occurring in speech, a new version of the coding manual could be developed to accommodate request strategies used in email communication. In order to do this, a faculty member could be asked to rate the

politeness of a variety of student email requests that use different types of request strategies, request perspectives, internal modifications and supportive moves. Moreover, additional research is needed in order to determine the most polite email opening and closing features in variety of email request contexts.

Appendix A
Part 1 of the survey

Background Information

1. Age

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ 18 - 25
- ☐ 26 - 35
- ☐ 36 - 45
- ☐ 45+

2. Gender

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

3. What is your current level of study at the University of Montana?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Undergraduate
- ☐ Graduate
- ☐ Other: _____

5. What is your major at the University of Montana?

6. Is English your native language (i.e. the first language you acquired as a child)?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

7. What languages other than English have you studied?

List the names of the languages in the box below and identify your level of proficiency in each language (e.g. elementary, intermediate, advanced).

Appendix B
Part 2 of the survey

Questions for nonnative speakers of English

If English is not your native language, please answer the questions below.

If English is your native language, please proceed to the next page.

1. If your native language is not English, what do you consider to be your native language(s) (i.e. the first language(s) you acquired as a child)?

2. What is your most recent TOEFL/IELTS score?

3. What is the date of your most recent TOEFL/ IELTS score?

4. How long have you been in the United States?

5. How does the size of the university you attend in your home country compare to the size of the University of Montana?

Check all that apply.

- ☐ They are the same size
- ☐ The university I attend in my home country is larger than the University of Montana
- ☐ The university I attend in my home country is smaller than the University of Montana

Appendix C
Part 3 of the survey

Email Situations

Please write down what you would write in these situations in real life.

1. Write an email to a University of Montana professor in your major requesting an extension on a course assignment that is due soon. Provide an adequate reason and give any other information to convince your professor to grant your request.

Enter the text of the email in the box below

2. How much of an imposition do you think this request is?

Imposition is determined by the time and effort required by your professor to perform the desired action. 1 is the lowest imposition. 5 is the highest imposition.

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Low imposition ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ High imposition

3. How much time did you spend writing this email?

4. If you needed an extension on an assignment, how likely would you be to ask your professor for the extension via email?

1 is not likely at all. 5 is very likely.

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Not likely at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very likely

5. Write an email to a University of Montana professor in your major asking to borrow a book that you know he/she has that is not available in the library. Explain why you need this book.

Enter the text of the email in the box below

6. How much of an imposition do you think this request is?

Imposition is determined by the time and effort required by your professor to perform the desired action. 1 is the lowest imposition. 5 is the highest imposition.

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Low imposition

☐☐☐☐☐

High imposition

7. How much time did you spend writing this email?

8. If you needed a book that is not available in the library, how likely would you be to ask your professor via email to lend you the book if you knew he /she has it?

1 is not likely at all. 5 is very likely.

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Not likely at all

☐☐☐☐☐

Very likely

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